

UNIVERSITY OF SWAZILAND
SUPPLEMENTARY EXAMINATIONS 2008

TITLE OF PAPER: **COMPARATIVE LITERATURE**

COURSE CODE: **ENG 405/ IDE/ENG 405/E4P4**

TIME ALLOWED: **1. ENG 405/IDE-ENG 405: TWO HOURS**
2. E4P4: THREE HOURS

INSTRUCTIONS:

- 1. ENG 405/IDE-ENG 405: Answer TWO questions.**
E4P4: Answer THREE questions.
- 2. Do not repeat material or write about the same text at length more than once.**
- 3. Good expression and adherence to literary conventions will count.**
- 4. All the questions carry equal marks.**
- 5. This paper is 5 pages long; cover page included.**

**THIS PAPER SHOULD NOT BE OPENED UNTIL PERMISSION HAS BEEN
GRANTED BY THE INVIGILATOR**

Question One

Read the following poems and answer the questions below:

“Self” Peter Abrahams

I am a shadow,
Restless,
Roving everywhere.
Dawn greets me
Sneaking from park bench
And a rendezvous with cold and sky,
I am a bum, hungry and lonely;
Milk vanishes from doorsteps at dawn
As I pass.

I'm a prostitute,
Seeking a pick-up from the street.
I have a kid and it cries for bread.
I'm a mother,
Just heard my son died at the Front –
A medal and an empty heart.
I'm a toiler, sweating all day,
But somehow I've more debts to pay.

I'm in the cold,
A youngster, hungry and thin,
My soul cries for love and laughter,
But I'm on this side of the window;
In there, there's fire and laughter
And the warmth of love.

I'm a poet,
And through hunger
And lust for love and laughter
I have turned myself into a voice,
Shouting the pain of the people
And the sunshine that is to be. (1940)

“Negro” Langston Hughes

I am a Negro:
Black as the night is black,
Black like the depths of my Africa.

I've been a slave:

Caesar told me to keep his door-steps clean.
I brushed the boots of Washington.

I've been a worker:

Under my hand the pyramids arose.
I made mortar for the Woolworth Building.

I've been a singer:

All the way from Africa to Georgia
I carried my sorrow songs.
I made ragtime.

I've been a victim:

The Belgians cut off my hands in the Congo.
They lynch me still in Mississippi.

- a. Discuss the image of African American/South African life projected in the two poems. [15]
- b. How have the two poets subjected poetic technique to their thematic purposes? [10]
- c. In your view, are the themes the poets raise still relevant? Discuss briefly. [05]

Question Two

Discuss how Andre Brink in A Dry White Season and Ernest Gaines in A Lesson Before Dying portray Gordon Ngubene and Jefferson as symbols of Black South Africans and African Americans' suffering under the white justice system, respectively. [30]

Question Three

Focusing on theme, setting and characterization compare and contrast Zakes Mda and Njabulo Ndebele's portrayal of their women characters in The Madonna of Excelsior and The Cry of Winnie Mandela. [30]

Question Four

"The quest for belonging is found in both Manchild in the Promised Land by Claude Brown and A Raisin in the Sun by Lorraine Hansberry."

- a) Discuss how each author advances this theme in his/her text. [24]
- b) Comment on whether, in your view, their respective choices of genre has worked to their advantage/disadvantage. [06]

Question Five

Read the poems below and answer the questions that follow:

“Being Human” Mzi Mahola

In my life
I planted seeds and seedlings
Which had brief appearances.

Though very few
I also planted trees,
Whose shade now cancels my shadow
And whose height dwarfs my ego.

Raising young ones is lovelier
And toughest by far.
Their easy laughter
Puts a spark in my life,
But each time they break
It kills a part of me.

“It Is Said” James Matthews

It is said
that poets write of beauty
of form, of flowers and of love
but the words I write
are of pain and rage.

I am no minstrel
who sings songs of joy
mine a lament

I wail of a land
hideous with open graves
waiting for the slaughtered ones

Balladeers strum their lutes and sing tunes of happy times
I cannot join in their merriment
my heart drowned in bitterness
with the agony of what white man’s law has done

- a) Briefly highlight the situation projected by each poem. [15]
- b) Compare and contrast the socio-political backdrop of the two poems and how it may have impacted on the respective poet’s choice of subject matter. [15]

Question Six

Write a well illustrated essay citing, comparing and contrasting the recurrent themes as well as the predominant stylistic features of South African and African American poetry.
[30]